

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 TRSE-00 AID-05 DHA-02 ORM-02

ACDA-07 ERDA-05 OES-07 DLOS-09 EB-07 AGRE-00

NRC-05 /130 W

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R 202026Z MAY 77

FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7728

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USMISSION IAEA VIENNA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 CARACAS 5093

EO 11652 GDS

TAGS: PFOR SHUM MNUC PARM PBOR VE AR ETRD EAGR

SUBJ: ARGENTINE PRESIDENT'S STATE VISIT TO VENEZUELA

REFS: CARACAS 4988, 4814, 4775(ALL NOTAL)

SUMMARY: PRESIDENT VIDELA'S VISIT TO VENEZUELA HAS BENEFITTED THE INTERESTS OF BOTH GOVTS. ARGENTINA'S ISOLATION, BOTH GEOGRAPHIC AND POLITICAL, WAS REDUCED SOMEWHAT, ARGENTINE EXPORTS TO VENEZUELA WILL GROW, AND VENEZUELA ENHANCED ITS LATIN AMERICAN AND DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP CREDENTIALS. END SUMMARY.

1. DEMOCRACY. IN JOINT COMMUNIQUE, SPEECHES AND PRESS CONFERENCE, PRESIDENT PEREZ PLACED GREAT EMPHASIS ON ARGENTINA'S RETURN TO THE DEMOCRATIC FOLD. PERZ SAID THAT "ARGENTINA IS MARCHING TOWARD ITS AUTHENTIC
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DEMOCRATIC HERITAGE" AND THAT VENEZUELA IS FULLY CONSCIOUS OF EFFORTS THAT ARGENTINA IS MAKING TO FIND A WAY FOR THE COUNTRY AND PEOPLE TO LIVE UNDER A DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM. PEREZ ALSO NOTED THAT VIDELA IS A POLITICAL LEADER WHO IS PREPARED TO OPEN A CHANNEL FOR A "DEMOCRATIC LATIN AMERICA" AND THAT " WE HAVE AGREED THAT DEMOCRACY IS THE ONLY SYSTEM WHICH CAN GUARANTEE OUR PROGRESS AND

PROVIDE FOR WELL-BEING TO WHICH OUR PEOPLES ASPIRE." FOR HIS PART, VIDELA PRAISED DEMOCRATIC HERITAGE OF HIS COUNTRY, AND SAID THAT ARMED FORCES' GOAL IS RESTORATION OF FULL DEMOCRACY, BUT THAT POLITICAL ORDER MUST FIRST BE RESTORED IN THE FACE OF POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CHAOS. VIDELA ALSO STRESSED THAT NO "FIXED" SCHEDULE HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED FOR THE RESTORATION OF CIVILIAN CONTROL, NOR IS THERE A SINGLE MODEL OF DEVELOPMENT WHICH SHOULD GUIDE ALL COUNTRIES.

2. HUMAN RIGHTS. PRESIDENT PEREZ ALSO SPOKE TO ISSUE OF HUMAN RIGHTS, AND NOTED THAT VENEZUELA RECOGNIZES FULL WELL THE SAD REALITY OF TERRORISM DESIGNED TO DESTROY PEACE AND THE SOCIAL ORDER, BUT CAUTIONED THAT UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD INDIVIDUAL HUMAN DIGNITY "BE VIOLATED." VIDELA, IN PRESS CONFERENCE, DENIED TO REPORTERS THERE ARE HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS, ALTHOUGH HE ADMITTED THERE HAVE BEEN "EXCESSES." HE ALSO SPOKE ABOUT "DISAPPEARANCES" OF PEOPLE, BUT ATTRIBUTED THESE VARIOUSLY TO A) SUICIDES B) EXTREMISTS LIQUIDATED BY THEIR OWN ORGANIZATIONS C) SOME LEADERS QUITTING POLITICS VOLUNTARILY AND D) THOSE KILLED IN BATTLES WITH THE POLICE AND MILITARY. HE WAS ALSO QUESTIONED SHARPLY BY VENEZUELAN LABOR LEADERS IN PRIVATE, ALTHOUGH AS REPORTED CARACAS 4988, THE PRESS HERE HAS STATED HIS INTERCHANGE WITH THE LABOR LEADERS WAS "CORDIAL."

3. NUCLEAR ENERGY, THE BRAZIL CONNECTION, AND THE FRANCO-GERMAN EXTRAPOLATION. JOINT COMMUNIQUE NOTED CONFIDENTIAL

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THAT BOTH COUNTRIES SEEK DEVELOPMENT OF NUCLEAR ENERGY FOR PACIFIC USES "WITHOUT DISCRIMINATION IN NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGY." PEREZ ALSO STATED IN MAY 11 PRESS CONFERENCE THAT THERE SHOULD BE EFFECTIVE CONTROL OF NUCLEAR ENERGY BEING DEVELOPED FOR PEACEFUL PURPOSES AND THAT BOTH COUNTRIES SHARE COMMON PURPOSES OF ARMS LIMITATIONS. IN THIS REGARD, WE HAVE LEARNED FROM CANADIANS THAT THE BRAZILIAN EMBASSY MADE FORMAL APPROACH TO THE CANADIAN EMBASSY HERE TO EXPLAIN THE BOG POSITION ON NUCLEAR ENERGY POLICY FOLLOWING THE VIDELA TRIP, INCLUDING SUBMISSION OF THE GOB WHITE PAPER ON BRAZIL'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM. BRAZILIANS WENT SO FAR AS TO STATE MAJOR ELEMENT IN VIDELA VISIT WAS ANTI-BRAZILIAN ANIMUS. SO FAR AS WE CAN DETERMINE, NO OTHER WESTERN DIPLOMATS WERE APPROACHED. BOTH THE GERMAN AND FRENCH EMBASSIES INTERPRETED THE LANGUAGE OF THE JOINT COMMUNIQUE TO THEIR FOREIGN MINISTRIES AS SIGNALLING A BASIC CHANGE IN VENEZUELAN POSITION ON NON-PROLIFERATION. THEIR INTERPRETATION WAS THAT THIS SIGNALLED A

MOVE TOWARD "GREATER REALISM" AND AWAY FROM PEREZ'
"UNREALISTIC," STRONG STATEMENTS MADE IN APRIL IN
SUPPORT OF PRESIDENT CARTER'S POSTURE ON NON-PROLIFERATION.
THE GERMANS, IN PARTICULAR, CONCLUDED THAT THE RESULTS
OF THE SHIRAZ CONFERENCE AND PEREZ' TRIP TO THE MIDDLE
EAST CONVINCED HIM THAT NUCLEAR ENERGY IS ABSOLUTELY
NECESSARY FOR LDC DEVELOPMENT AND THAT VENEZUELA
WOULD HENCEFORTH TAKE A MORE LENIENT VIEW TOWARDS SAFE-
GUARDS AND PROLIFERATION RISKS. THE GERMANS ALSO
BELIEVE THIS SHIFT MEANS THAT VENEZUELA NO LONGER OPPOSES
THE TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER ASPECTS OF THE BRAZILIAN-GERMAN
NUCLEAR SALES PACKAGE.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 CARACAS 5093

4. OTHER FOREIGN POLICY ITEMS. ASIDE FROM MAJOR EMPHASIS
ON DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS, JOINT COMMUNIQUE, AND TO
LESSER EXTENT SPEECHES BY TWO LEADERS, CONTAINED STANDARD
REFERENCES TO COUNTRIES' SUPPORT FOR GOAL OF ELIMINATING
COLONIALISM, INCLUDING UK CONTROL OVER FALKLAND ISLANDS,
PROMPT CONCLUSION OF PANAMA CANAL TREATY, END TO DIS-
CRIMINATION IN COMMERCIAL AGREEMENTS (READ GSP EXCLUSION),
SUPPORT FOR BOLIVIA'S SEA CORRIDOR ASPIRATIONS, DISARMAMENT
OBJECTIVES, AND LOS, CIEC, SELA, LAFTA AND THE OAS.

5. COMMERICAL EXCHANGES. LEADERS AGREED TO INCREASE TECHNICAL, CULTURAL AND COMMERCIAL EXCHANGES, INCLUDING AN OPENING FOR LIMITED IMPORTATION OF ARGENTINA BEEF TO MEET SHORT-FALL IN VENEZUELAN MARKET. VENEZUELA NOW IMPORTS MOST OF ITS BEEF FROM COLOMBIA AND COSTA RICA AND HAS HERETOFORE BARRED ARGENTINE BEEF DESPITE THE CONFIDENTIAL

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FACT THAT NEITHER COUNTRY HAS BEEN ABLE TO MEET GROWING VENEZUELAN DEMAND. ARGENTINE EMBASSY OFFICIALS POINT OUT THAT THERE ALREADY IS CONSIDERABLE BILATERAL TRADE (400 ITEMS) AND BELIEVE THAT ARGENTINE BEEF COULD BECOME MAJOR IMPORT ITEM BECAUSE OF ITS COMPETITIVENESS WITH BEEF NOW SOLD HERE.

6. COMMENT: PRESIDENT VIDELA HANDLED HIMSELF WELL. HE WAS ARTICULATE, COOL UNDER PRESSURE, AND ALWAYS UNDER CONTROL. HE ARTFULLY AVOIDED STUMBLING ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE IN PUBLIC AND GAVE HIS HOSTS THE IMPRESSION THAT HE IS A MODERATE, INTELLIGENT MAN WITH INCHOATE, BUT NONETHELESS GENUINE DEMOCRATIC INSTINCTS. ACCORDING TO AN ARGENTINE EMBASSY SOURCE, MOST OF THE CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE TWO LEADERS FOCUSED ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND A RETURN TO DEMOCRACY IN ARGENTINA. THE RAPPORT BETWEEN BOTH LEADERS WAS APPARENTLY VERY GOOD, AND THE VENEZUELAN WENT OUT OF THEIR WAY TO MAKE THE VISIT A SUCCESS BY CATERING TO THE ARGENTINES' EVERY SISH. TO THE ANGUISH OF THE ARGENTINE EMBASSY IN CARACAS, THE GOA HAD HESITATED A GREAT DEAL ABOUT THE VISIT. HOW THAT IT IS OVER, THE GOA REPORTEDLY PERCEIVES IT AS ADVANTAGEOUS IN EVERY WAY. IN POLITICAL TERMS, IT TENDED TO REDUCE ARGENTINA'S GEOGRAPHIC ISOLATION. ALSO, THE VENEZUELAN BOTH IN THE JOINT COMMUNIQUE AND IN THE VARIOUS STATEMENTS MADE BY PRESIDENT PEREZ, LAID HANDS ON PRESIDENT VIDELA'S LEADERSHIP AND HIS EFFORTS TO LEAD ARGENTINA BACK TOWARD DEMOCRACY. THESE ENDORSEMENTS PAID TRIBUTE TO ARGENTINA'S STATURE AS AN IMPORTANT SOUTH AMERICAN POWER AND CLEARLY PUT SOME DISTANCE BETWEEN IT AND OTHER SOUTH AMERICAN MILITARY DICTATORSHIPS, PARTICULARLY BRAZIL AND CHILE. A SECOND MAJOR BENEFIT IN ARGENTINA'S EYES WAS THE OPPORTUNITY FOR INCREASED TRADE, PARTICULARLY IN BEEF, AN IMPORTANT PLUS NOW THAT THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY IS CLOSING ITSELF OFF TO THAT PRODUCT. A THIRD MAJOR BENEFIT, SHARED WITH VENEZUELA, WAS A CLEAR CONFIDENTIAL

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SIGNAL TO BRAZIL THAT ITS SPANISH-SPEAKING NEIGHBORS ARE CAPABLE OF INTERACTING TO RESIST ANY HEGEMONIC ASPIRATIONS OF THAT COLOSSUS. FINALLY, FROM THE VENEZUELAN SIDE, THE GOV PERCEIVED THE VIDELA VISIT AS A WAY OF ENCOURAGING DEMOCRACY IN ARGENTINA, A CONCEPT WHICH THE GOV AND BOTH MAJOR VENEZUELAN POLITICAL PARTIES TAKE VERY SERIOUSLY INDEED. IN TERMS OF PRESIDENT PEREZ PERSONALLY, THE VISIT ENHANCES HIS STATUS AS A LATIN AMERICAN LEADER AND INCIDENTALLY HELPS STRENGTHEN HIS CREDENTIALS FOR ASSUMING THE LEADERSHIP OF THE AD PARTY WHEN HE LEAVES OFFICE.

WITH REGARD TO THE REFERENCES IN THE COMMUNIQUE TO NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGY, WE DO NOT AGREE WITH THE FRANCO-GERMAN INTERPRETATION AND CONSIDER IT A BIZARRE READING REFLECTING THEIR OWN NUCLEAR POLICY INTERESTS. WE BELIEVE VENEZUELA CONTINUES TO SUPPORT ACCESS TO NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGY SO LONG AS IT IS ADEQUATELY SAFEGUARDED AND DOES NOT CONTRIBUTE TO NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION. ONE INDICATION OF THIS IS THAT PRESIDENT PEREZ TOLD ARA ASSISTANT SECRETARY TODMAN THAT HE INTENDED TO RAISE PROLIFERATION WITH VIDELA AND ASK HIM ABOUT ARGENTINA'S RATIFICATION OF THE TREATY OF TLALTELOLCO. WE HAVE NO REASON TO DOUBT PEREZ' WORD ON THIS POINT. END COMMENT.

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